

South Street Seaport Museum,
232-234 Front Street
(Smith, Gershom, Building)
New York City
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5679

HABS
NY,
31-NE40,
137-

PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM
232-234 FRONT STREET
(Gershom Smith Building)

HABS No. NY-5679

Location: 232-234 Front Street,
Between Beekman Street and Peck Slip,
New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: 232 Front Street Corporation.

Present Occupant: Mazur Bros. & Jaffe Fish Co., Inc.

Present Use: Fish Market.

Significance: Originally built for grocer Gershom Smith in 1816, this broad double building was converted into a stable in 1897. The building remained a stable until about 1930, the only one in the neighborhood; today the stable ramps and Belgian block floors remain.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1816. In the 1815 tax records, 232 Front St. was assessed as a vacant lot to Thomas Farmer. In 1815, Gershom Smith bought Lots 33 and 34 from Farmer, et al. By 1817, the lots were no longer vacant; Abraham Cargill, tinsmith, was at 232 Front St., assessed at \$5,000 and William Shotegett was at 234 Front St. (it is a double building), assessed at \$5,000. (In addition, on July 31, 1815, Smith petitioned the Common Council, complaining that the house owned by the corporation of the City of New York on the corner of Front and Peck Slip encroached 3'6" on the street.)
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The building is built on two lots, lots 33 and 34, on Block 97W. Information for the following chain of title comes from the New York City Conveyance Records Surrogate's Court:

August 18, 1815

Liber 109; p. 541
Christian Marschalk
Hannah Farmer
Samual F. Jarvis
Sarah McCurdy
to Gershom Smith

August 18, 1815

Liber 109; p. 544
Christian Marschalk
to Gershom Smith

January 19, 1844

Liber 443, p. 148 & p. 150
Ruggles, Philo T.
(Master in Chancery)
Thomas H. Smith, et al, defendants
to
John G. Frost
Lots 33 and 34 sold at auction
at the Merchants Exchange

June 25, 1886

Liber 1957; p. 414
John G. Frost
to
Isaac T. Frost

July 19, 1888

Liber 2156; p. 152
Isaac T. Frost
to
Amy Matilda Frost

July 21, 1890

Liber 2341; p. 28
Isaac T. and Amy M. Frost
to
John H. O'Rourke

May 28, 1897

Liber 41; p. 358
John H. and Agnes L. O'Rourke
to
Luther Laflin Kellogg
(one-half interest of lots 33, 34)

October 7, 1905

Liber 96; p. 252
Luther Laflin and
Eliza McIntosh Kellogg
to
John J. Glynn

October 7, 1905

Liber 96; p. 253
John H. O'Rourke
(Exr. of)
to
John J. Glynn

October 7, 1905

Liber 96; p. 255
John J. and Margaret Glynn
to
Jacob J. Wallenstein

December 21, 1905

Liber 97; p. 181
Jacob J. and Sadie Wallenstein
to
William G. and Paul P. Ihrig

July 12, 1906

Liber 105; p. 250
Paul P. and Anna L. Ihrig
to
William G. Ihrig

January 21, 1917

Liber 3014; p. 169
William G. and Annie E. Ihrig
to
Alliance Realty Co.

March 30, 1917

Liber 3017; p. 189
Alliance Realty Co.
to
Michael J. Ginnane

Oct. 15, 1947

Liber 4536; p. 236
May V. Ginnane and
Agnes Ginnane
Catherine G. Gaydos
Emma G. McIndoe
Margaret Ginnane
Ruth Ginnane
Anna G. Powell
Thomas Ginnane
Phyllis A. G. McDermott
heirs of
Michael J. Ginnane
Katherine J. Ginnane
heirs of
Albert H.
to
232 Front St. Corp.

Oct. 15, 1947

Liber 4536; p. 253
Catherine G. Gaydos
Margaret C. Ginnane
(Exr. of)
to
232 Front St. Corp.

4. Original plan and construction: A view entitled "Panorama of New York and Vicinity," 1879 shows 232-234 Front St. before its first recorded alteration in 1882. Before the alteration the building was four stories tall with a high pitched peak roof of slate and tin.
5. Alterations and additions: While 232-234 Front St. was still a flour store in 1882, J. G. Frost & Co. hired architect J. J. Devoe to raise the building by one story at a cost of \$3,500. Originally 34 feet high, the building was raised to five stories at 45'6".

Part of the alteration included flattening the roof at front and rear. Because the rear wall was cracked, it was taken down and rebuilt 16 inches thick to the roof. The front wall was secured by a star anchor. Ceilings of the upper stories were 7 feet high while the main floor ceiling was 7'9".

Although probably used as a stable before, in 1897 architect John Mumford and builder John T. Gallagher converted the store into a stable for owners John H. O'Rourke and L. Laflin Kellogg at a cost of \$5,000.

To achieve the goal, the five-story building was changed to four stories by raising the second and third tiers, removing the fourth tier and leaving the fifth. The old roof following the peak lines was removed and new metal interior columns were substituted for old ones. A new fifteen-inch front wall replaced the original from the second tier up, carried by two bonded corner piers and three cast-iron columns. The owner received permission to retain the original stone rubble 2½ foot thick foundation.

The horses were kept in stalls on the second and third stories while the wagons were on the first and the hay and feed were on the fourth. Ramps on the left-hand side of the building allowed the horses to ascend. (Detailed alteration plans are filed with the Buildings Department.) The Belgian block floors on the upper stories remain today.

While still used as a stable in 1907, new owner William G. Ihrig employed James F. Egan, architect, to design a one-story brick rear extension, 38 feet long, 8 feet deep and 16 feet high to be used for storage.

In 1921, Franklin Iron Works installed a canopy at the first story level. In addition, iron rolling shutters were installed after Franklin Iron Works removed brick work between the doors and windows.

- B. Historical Context: The broad double building was built for grocer Gershom Smith in 1816. From the beginning, Abraham Cargill, tinsmith, conducted his business there. Minutes of the Common Council show that Cargill was active in the community, serving as a fireman and election inspector. While Smith owned the building, several other grocers shared the premises including Thomas H. Mills, Vanderbilt Hanford, J. O. Donohue and Edward G. Faile (who later built himself a store next door in 1827-28).

In 1844 John G. Frost bought the building at auction. The Frost brothers conducted their flour business there, selling the building in 1890 to John H. O'Rourke. Jonathan Frost continued to pay taxes on the property until 1893.

It is uncertain when the building was first used as a stable but it was before the structure was altered in 1897. While John O'Rourke was never listed in the directories at 232-234 Front Street, he is listed at other addresses in Manhattan as a horse trainer,

In 1897, when O'Rourke sold half interest to Luther Laflin Kellogg, a lawyer, they altered the building into a stable. The alteration application states that the building had been occupied as "a storage house for coffee and later as a stable."

In 1905 William and Paul Ihrig bought the stable and continued to use it as such. A 1915 directory lists William G. Ihrig at 232 Front St. under Livery, Sale and Boarding Stables. Insurance maps indicate that this building was the only structural stable in the neighborhood.

In 1917 Michael Ginnane bought the stable as a business and home. By 1928 his home was elsewhere. By the early 1930s the building was probably no longer used as a stable.

Mazur Bros. & Jaffe Fish Co. have occupied the building since 1946.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

See accompanying HABS photograph of the plain building for a visual observation.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early views:

An 1879 view from Panorama of New York, Brooklyn and Vicinity, published by Wittenmann Bros. in New York shows part of 232-234 Front St. before the 1882 alteration. From the Prints & Photographs Collection of the Library of Congress.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

New York City Tax Records, Municipal Archives, 23 Park Row.

New York City Department of Buildings. Municipal Building, Alteration Application #15 (1882), plan of section; #1010 (1897), complete set of plans for stable alteration; #844 (1907), plan available; #1942 (1921), plan available.

Roberts, Lee and Steinke, Nancy, "Inventory of Structures in the Brooklyn Bridge S.E. Urban Renewal Area," New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, May 1968, p. 11.

Rosebrock, Ellen, "South Street Seaport Historic District," New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1974, p. 25.

Insurance Maps of the City of New York, 1857-1976, New York Historical Society.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Minutes of the Common Council, 1784-1831. New York: The City of New York, 1917, Vol. 3, p. 147; Vol. 8, p. 265; Vol. 12, p. 460; Vol. 13, p. 319.

Rosebrock, Ellen Fletcher. Walking Around in South Street. New York: South Street Seaport Museum.

New York City Directories, New York Historical Society, New York City.

Prepared by: Lori Zabar
HABS Project Historian
Summer 1976

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The South Street Seaport project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with the co-operation of the South Street Seaport Museum, Inc. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1976 by Frederick W. Wiedenmann (HABS Washington, D.C. office) project supervisor; Lori Zabar (Columbia University), project historian; Robert Lee Wiltse (Louisiana State University), architect; and student architects-Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Joe E. Price (Texas Tech University), and John R. Temmink (University of Virginia). Susan McCown, a HABS historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Walter Smalling, Jr. of the National Park Service took the photographs of the South Street Seaport structures.